

Introduction



The Talbot County Comprehensive Plan is the result of thoughtful discussions and effort by many citizen and stakeholder groups to focus on the County's long-range future. The actions outlined in each chapter attempt to strike a balance for the best interest of the community.

The Comprehensive Plan is a guide for public officials and citizens who will guide the County's growth and development over the next twenty years. The Plan presents a range of visions for Talbot County the coming decades and outlines a framework for consistent decision making to bring those visions to fruition.

The Plan encourages citizens to take an active role in planning, encourages greater cooperation between the County and Towns and provides strong recommendations for the protection of the County's key assets including sensitive environmental resources and rural lands.

Purpose of the Plan

The Talbot County Comprehensive Plan is an official public document adopted by the County Council. It presents a long-range guide for growth, land use and development decisions in the County. It is also a guide for

other decisions related to growth and development that can help the County determine when and where new public facilities and improvements are needed.

The Plan is comprehensive because it covers a broad range of elements related to growth and development. Its recommendations are broad, rather than narrowly defining specific land use decisions.

Goals of the Plan focus on the next twenty years and provide guidance for investment and development decisions. Policies may be amended as circumstances change over time, without straying from the basic goals of the Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan is not a development ordinance, but sets the framework and basis for the County's Zoning Ordinance and other development regulations, including amendments to the existing ordinances.

Talbot County's first major Comprehensive Plan was prepared in 1973 and was updated in 1990 and again in 1997. The 2005 Comprehensive Plan replaced the County's 1997 Plan as the guiding document for the County's planning efforts. This document is a review and update of the 2005 Plan.

Comprehensive Plan Process

This review of the Comprehensive Plan began in 2011. The 2005 Plan was the product of citizens, the Planning Commission, County Council, County staff and consultants and evolved through a series of citizen committees, work sessions and public hearings.

This edition is a review of the extensive document adopted in 2005. Committees comprised of stakeholder organizations and citizens reviewed the contents of each chapter and assessed the County's progress towards achieving the goals of the Plan.

For the 2005 Plan, over 100 citizen committee members expressed a growing County-wide concerns about the rate of growth and change that had been occurring. The committees reaffirmed the County's long term commitment to environmental and critical area protection and articulated the desire to retain the rural character of the community by managing growth to prevent sprawl and to protect agriculture as a primary industry.

Several implementation strategies to support the land use and development objectives were identified in the planning process. Among those which have been incorporated into the County Ordinances are:

Countryside Preservation Areas, zoning districts that establish outer growth boundaries for the towns and define the limits of urban growth.

Western Rural Conservation, another new planning district for the non-critical area portions of western Talbot County. The WRC supports development controls and natural resource enhancement programs while providing for limited low-density residential development.

Impact fees applied to new development to support community services and facilities.

Organization of the Plan

The Comprehensive Plan is organized into nine chapters. Chapters One and Two provide the context and background information for the Plan. The remaining Chapters contain plan

elements organized in related topic areas. In practice, concerns and topics overlap and may not be thoroughly discussed in a single chapter.

Each chapter begins with Vision and Goals statements, followed by a

discussion of existing conditions, circumstances and programs. Tables of policies and implementation 'Action Items' are included at the end of the plan.

Legal Basis for Planning

Talbot County is a Charter County and as such derives its authority for planning from the Annotated Code of Maryland and the County Charter of 1974. The State's Land Use Article outlines the minimum requirements for a Comprehensive Plan which include, the Goals and Objectives, Land Use Plan and other elements covered in this document. The Land Use Article also requires local



Maryland's Twelve Planning Visions

I. Quality of Life and Sustainability:

A high quality of life is achieved through universal stewardship of the land, water, and air resulting in sustainable communities and protection of the environment.

II. Public Participation:

Citizens are active partners in the planning and implementation of community initiatives and are sensitive to their responsibilities in achieving community goals.

III. Growth Areas:

Growth is concentrated in existing population and business centers, growth areas adjacent to these centers, or strategically selected new centers.

IV. Community Design:

Compact, mixed-use, walkable design - consistent with existing community character and located near available or planned transit options - is encouraged to ensure efficient use of land and transportation resources and preservation and enhancement of natural systems, open spaces, recreational areas, and historical, cultural, and archeological resources.

V. Infrastructure:

Growth areas have the water resources and infrastructure to accommodate population and business expansion in an orderly, efficient, and environmentally sustainable manner;

VI. Transportation:

A well-maintained, multimodal transportation system facilitates the safe, convenient, affordable, and efficient movement of people, goods, and services within and between population and business centers;

VII. Housing:

A range of housing densities, types, and sizes provides residential options for citizens of all ages and incomes;

VIII. Economic Development:

Economic development and natural resource-based businesses that promote employment opportunities for all income levels within the capacity of the State's natural resources, public services, and public facilities are encouraged;

IX. Environmental Protection:

Land and water resources, including the Chesapeake and coastal bays, are carefully managed to restore and maintain healthy air and water, natural systems, and living resources;

X. Resource Conservation:

Waterways, forests, agricultural areas, open space, natural systems, and scenic areas are conserved;

XI. Stewardship:

Government, business entities, and residents are responsible for the creation of sustainable communities by collaborating to balance efficient growth with resource protection; and

XII. Implementation:

Strategies, policies, programs, and funding for growth and development, resource conservation, infrastructure, and transportation are integrated across the local, regional, state, and interstate levels to achieve these Visions.

jurisdictions review their Comprehensive Plans six years after adoption. During this review, data should be updated to incorporate any new relevant information that developed during the intervening time.

The context for planning for future development in Talbot County must also take into consideration the role that the County will play in implementing the overall growth management policies established by the Planning Act of 1992 and subsequent legislation.

The policy guidance, amended in 2008, is stated as “Twelve Visions” for the future.

Relationship to Other County Planning Documents

The Comprehensive Plan is not a stand-alone document, but is supported by (and, in turn supports) related Planning Program documents including:

- Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Plan
- Comprehensive Sewer and Water Plan
- Land Preservation and Recreation Plan
- Floodplain Ordinance
- Zoning Ordinance
- Land Subdivision Regulations
- Roads Ordinance
- Forest Conservation Ordinance
- Building Code
- Livability Code
- Stormwater Management Ordinance

These and other plans and ordinances should be in general conformance with the Comprehensive Plan. However, as with any update or revision of a major planning document, conflicts may arise between previously adopted policies and newly proposed policies. The policies and guidelines

contained within this Comprehensive Plan supersede any conflicting policies and/or guidelines contained in any of the above mentioned plans.

The Talbot County Comprehensive Plan takes into consideration the comprehensive development plans and ordinances of the incorporated municipalities within the County. The Plan also refers to applicable State plans and ordinances which affect the growth and development of Talbot County.

Under the Talbot County Charter, the Planning Commission makes advisory recommendations to the Planning Officer and the Council relating to the Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Officer also has the continuing responsibility and duty of making recommendations to the Council for the revision of the Comprehensive Plan. The Council has the ultimate authority to determine the content of the Comprehensive Plan, taking the Planning Commission’s advisory recommendations and the Planning Officer’s recommendations into account.

Public Review and Adoption

The draft proposal for the Comprehensive Plan will be presented to the public in several forums and public hearings. The initial introduction will be at a public meeting prior delivery to the Planning Commission.

The Planning Commission may choose to review the draft document in work sessions prior to scheduling public hearings on the draft plan. Following the public hearings the Commission may consider additional revisions. The Plan is officially recommended to the County Council.

The Plan, still in draft form, is passed to the Talbot County Council. Council similarly holds public hearings and may revise the Plan before voting for adoption.

Implementation

The Comprehensive Plan is a policy document guiding public and private land use decisions and will be implemented through a variety of regulatory and financial tools.

Comprehensive plans are implemented through the Zoning Ordinance, and other county planning and regulatory documents, the Capital Improvement Program, State and federal regulations and funding, and non-regulatory programs such as voluntary land management programs.

Talbot County has over time implemented a number of progressive growth management strategies that have begun to direct the pace and location of development.

This plan recommends additional implementation strategies to better manage the density and location of growth, improve environmental quality, and ensure the provision of public facilities that meet the changing needs of residents and to reduce the burden of expanding public infrastructure on existing residents.

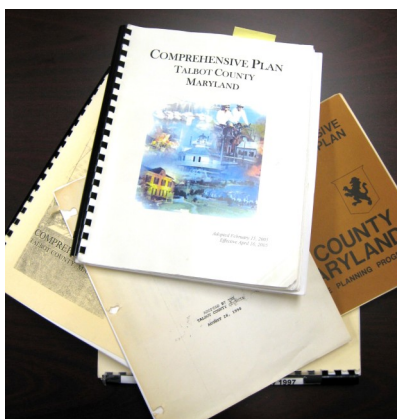
To monitor progress in achieving the Plan's goals and strategies, the Planning Commission may establish a process to review the effectiveness of regulatory and non-regulatory tools and make recommendations to the County Council when appropriate,

which the Council may or may not approve as it sees fit.

The Planning Commission and Planning Officer in the course of their duties periodically review and update indicators of change. On an annual basis, the Planning Commission and Planning Officer reports on indicators of growth to the Maryland Department of Planning and to the public. Review and analysis of short term changes is an important step in evaluating and predicting potential shifts in the plan's assumptions.

The Planning Commission should maintain a dynamic relationship with the incorporated towns to review proposed developments in the designated growth areas. Managing the density and design of growth in the incorporated areas is critical to the success of the Plan's overarching goal to protect the rural character of the County.

As with any document, amendments may be needed over time depending on new initiatives, more detailed planning, changes in growth projections, or changes in government policies. While annual review will provide indicators of short term changes, significant changes in development trends frequently take more years to become apparent. The Comprehensive Plan is intended to be long-range, establishing goals, policies and implementation strategies that will be accomplished in five to twenty years.



Comprehensive Planning Resources

Maryland Department of Planning, *local government planning*
www.mdp.state.md.us/ourwork/localplanning.shtml

Maryland Department of the Environment, *overview of regulatory authority*
www.mde.state.md.us/programs/regulations/pages/index.aspx

Maryland Department of Natural Resources, *Sustainable Maryland*
www.dnr.state.md.us/sustainability

Maryland Department of Agriculture, *resource conservation*
www.mda.maryland.gov/resource_conservation

Maryland Historical Trust, *information for local governments*
<http://mht.maryland.gov/governments.html>

Maryland Emergency Management Agency, *plans and preparedness*
<http://memama.maryland.gov/pages/default.aspx>

Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development
<http://dhcd.maryland.gov/website/programs>

Maryland State Highway Administration
www.roads.maryland.gov

American Planning Association, *community planning*
www.planning.org/community